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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Introduction

1. In 1999 the Association was recognized as an NGO by the Italian Government. The Association is a Catholic Community, made up of people who have chosen to share their lives with those who are socially neglected and oppressed. The Association seeks to fight injustice by sharing and living side by side with the poorest and those who have been abandoned. The members of the community live in home families ("*case famiglia*"), therapeutic communities for drug addicts, and work in social cooperatives and in various projects aimed at social development and at fighting in a non-violent manner to remove the causes of marginalization. The community is open to believers and non-believers, to those who wish to contribute to a fairer and more just society.

2. The Association is based in Italy but operates all over the world and in particular in Europe (Italy, San Marino, the Netherlands, Croatia, Albania, Russian Federation, Romania, Moldova), Africa (Kenya, Zambia, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda), Asia (Palestine, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), South America (Brazil, Chile, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Bolivia), and in Australia.

3. Within the framework of the 46th session of the Commission for Social Development having *"Promoting full employment and decent work for all"* as core theme, it is important to underline the great importance the Association gives to this theme.

4. For the Association this is a fundamental aim to achieve in order to remove the causes generating marginalization. The Association is committed to achieve such great aims through implementing several activities within its projects. Some examples in brief:

"Cicetekelo" project in Ndola (Zambia) and *"Time to live, time to share"* project in La Paz (Bolivia) have both been implemented with the aim to reintegrate street children in society giving them the possibility to learn, to find and to maintain a job.

5. The street children phenomenon is unfortunately quite widespread. Street children live in extremely vulnerable conditions; they are marginalized from any socio-economic context. Most of them do not attend school, and the set of bad conditions related to life in the streets- poverty, hunger, violence and any kind of abuse, leads them into the road of the so-called "drug of the poor" - glue sniffing-, therefore, their health and personal self-esteem worsen day after day.

Main aims of these projects are:

(a) Helping children recover their dignity as human beings and safeguard their development, paying particular attention to the educational, social and ethical aspects;
(b) Reintegrating them in school;
(c) Providing them with professional training;
(d) Guiding children towards economic independence and full self-fulfilment.

These projects have the same goals and they differ only in the methods since they are set in completely different social, cultural and economic environments.

"Cicetekelo" project

6. In Zambia 83 per cent of the population live under the poverty line. The country is deeply affected by HIV/AIDS pandemic. Extreme poverty, family disintegration and the wide spread of AIDS in the past few years have forced a lot of children to quit school and live by their wits on the street.

7. In this context of deep hardship, in 1998 the Association implemented "Cicetekelo project". Cicetekelo means "hope" in local language, and welcomes street children willing to change their lifestyle.

The project focuses on two major areas:

(a) Education: To provide literary education;

(b) Skills training: To enable the youths to become self reliant in the future, several professional training courses are made available: carpentry, mechanics, woodcarving/soap-stone sculptures, fabrication of building materials, farming and cattle breeding. Each course lasts three years and youngsters are assisted by a teacher for both practice and theoretical lessons.

8. At the end of the second year, the youngsters that reach certain level of preparation and maturity have to take state examination and are awarded a Certificate of Professional Proficiency recognized by the Zambian Government. During the third year this professional training becomes more intensive and youngsters start to receive economic aid for their work; half of it has to be deposited in a special fund that will be given back to them at the end of their professional experience, together with a set of professional tools to guarantee the basic conditions so that they can start their own business once they leave the programme.

9. After the three-year programme, youngsters are prepared and trained to enter the job market.
However, as it is so hard to find a job in Ndola, a few possibilities are made available by the project itself:

- Some youth are employed within the project through a standard contract of employment;
- Agreements are in place with local firms willing to employ people on a regular basis, being guarantor and tutor for youngsters against the firm and vice versa;
- Youth who are willing to start their own business are supported by providing the necessary amount of money at the end of the course, plus a set of tools, and they are supported for one year for all difficulties.

"Time to live, time to share" project

10. This project has also been implemented due to the deeply affected socio-economic situation in Bolivia. In fact, based on the data gathered after the 2001 census, Bolivia has 8,274,325 inhabitants, 45 per cent of whom are under 18 years of age; about 2,500,000 of that number are children living in poverty and more than 616,000 of them are child-workers. Just in La Paz and El Alto, these working children number about 3,700.

11. Considering the situation of street children, the project has developed a well framed programme planning not only professional training but also a true individual rehabilitation process, to recover their dignity and inner life with a particular focus on the spiritual and psychological aspects.

12. To this end, after a brief period spent building up acquaintance and friendly relationship, young people start a special programme structured in several stages, with the main aim to let youngsters realize what their skills are, the positive aspects of their life, understand that it is possible to live a life based on truth, justice and love, and also become independent economically. During this awareness process, providing professional training and favouring going back to school are two aspects of utmost importance.

13. For the second phase of this recovery programme, young people are included into a training course to learn some particular jobs such as carpentry, machinery, bakery, pasta and ice-cream production, cattle breeding and vegetable growing. Illiterate youngsters are taught to read and write. Afterwards, their professional training is completed by educational stages at any of the Association's work activities (restaurant, ice cream parlour) so that they can gain the training and skills to meet the quality level required by the labour market. At the end of the programme, young people are helped to look for a job and, for a period of at least one year, they get all the necessary support and assistance to face all the difficulties.

Professional training for women and micro-credit programmes for people affected in different ways by the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Rainbow project Zambia

14. In Africa AIDS orphans are taken care by their widowed mothers, their extended family (aunts, grandmothers) or distant relatives. Given the high number of children without parents and the poverty they live in, it is of utmost importance to provide economic support to these families because they are on the brink of disintegration and hunger. Besides the short-term assistance that can be provided, it is essential to create job opportunities so that the adults that look after these children can have an income to sustain the family.

15. The agricultural micro-finance programme was launched in Zambia in 2000 in order to give the poorest families the chance to find a decent job, to provide for food, using and improving their professional skills acquired along years of experience, but that they could never make use of due to lack of access to the factors of production.

16. The programme aims at finding a balance between daily and long-term needs through a "twin track approach". In the first track of the programme, people are trained for 2 weeks, followed by updating courses. Afterwards they are given an initial capital in kind- fertilizers and seeds. In the second track the people targeted by the programme are given food, health and school assistance for 3 months so that they are not forced to use the initial capital given to survive.

The programme involves families for a period of 4 years and it works as follows:

- First year – the beneficiaries receive training, initial capital (seeds, fertilizers, etc.), technical assistance and food assistance, schooling for children
- Second year – they have to attend updating courses, technical assistance and further capital in agricultural input; then
- Third year – further technical assistance and agricultural inputs
- Fourth year – the agricultural inputs are given for free

The beneficiaries are expected to pay back the capital in kind- agricultural products- but are not expected to pay any interest on it. The rate of paying back this capital is around 95-98 per cent.